

Epitaph

— so there I stood, dying in public
terror rippled through my bones like a signature of all I was
as you first laid eyes on me
and you saw my wounds
and you called them beautiful
I wept that your kind words could not stop the bleeding.

— and as you held my face I winced,
worried you'd recoil at the sight of hands stained red
but you smiled at them, and I saw you for what you truly were:
bloodthirsty.

— a stranger to this love, intoxicated by its all-encompassing nature,
I tried to give you everything
gutting myself to make room for you but you could still not fit
for while I appeared empty, I was fuller than I had ever been
full of pain, the wealth of my violence
or, more simply:
rage.

— as the anger consumed me, I tried in anguish to remember anything else
but words and pictures escaped me, instead trapped within a single color:
red.
finding the pallet constrained thus, I did the only thing I could do;
I sought the painter.

— studying the brushstrokes for days and nights without rest, I
recognized many styles within, jagged textures, imperceptible shapes, rough lines I
had known for many years, I
identified their origins, and gathered their masters for trial
but not one of them would sign their name to the canvas
“we may have taught these techniques,” they said “but we can take no credit for this grotesque and
beautiful product.”
and as they continued admiring my corpse, I
felt that terror ripple through my bones once more.
“what do you call it?” they asked.
I took a breath

— “Self Portrait.”